

VZCZCXRO3653
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHNT #0477/01 0821008
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 231008Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7265
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 2626
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 8719
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 3220
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3092

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN, INL/AAE, AND G/TIP
ASTANA ALSO FOR USAID

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: CHANGING UZBEK LAW ENFORCEMENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS
TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Sensitive but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

11. (SBU) Summary: The International Organization for Migration kicked off an INL-funded project to assist Uzbek law enforcement authorities to investigate and prosecute trafficking-in-persons cases with a workshop for the heads of regional Ministry of Internal Affairs countertrafficking units. Participants expressed frustration with existing legislation, which considers trafficking a "non-dangerous" offense, and, in their reading of the law, does not criminalize the recruitment of victims. They also noted that responsibility for investigating trafficking offenses within the Ministry falls to the same units charged with investigating routine prostitution and other vice cases. Emboffs were pleased to see that the participants were active and engaged during the workshop; however, survey responses and other comments made during the training demonstrate how much work needs to be done in shifting the stereotypes of trafficking victims prevalent among Uzbek law enforcement authorities. End summary.

12. (U) The International Organization for Migration conducted training February 22-23 for the heads of Ministry of Internal Affairs counter-trafficking-in-persons units from 13 provinces of Uzbekistan. The Tashkent training represents the kickoff of a two-year project, funded by Post's INL program, designed to increase the capacity of Uzbekistan's law enforcement and judicial officials to investigate and prosecute trafficking-related offenses. The International Organization for Migration will follow up on this training with a seminar for front line police officers the week of March 26.

13. (SBU) The February training focused on raising participants' awareness of trafficking issues, and on shifting stereotypes about victims using a combination of lectures and interactive training techniques. Participants also discussed problems with Uzbekistan trafficking-related legislation and the way that the Ministry of Internal Affairs is organized to handle trafficking cases. They expressed frustration that trafficking is considered a "non-dangerous" crime, meaning that perpetrators usually are eligible for amnesty (and the chance to disappear) while awaiting trial and after conviction. They also said that because the actual criminal conduct in trafficking cases occurs outside of Uzbekistan, there is often little they can do to stop recruiters from operating here. (Comment: The participants implied that recruiting victims, even if the recruiter knows what will happen to them in the destination country, is not a crime under Uzbek law. This represents a misunderstanding of the law, and shows how little understanding even those

officers responsible for trafficking investigations have of the issues involved. End comment.) The officers also noted that trafficking investigations are handled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Crimes Prevention Department, which is also responsible for vice investigations. As a result, these officers spend the majority of their time dealing with "regular" prostitution cases, making it that much harder for them to deal with trafficking cases appropriately.

¶4. (SBU) The training demonstrated that a very high level of prejudice towards trafficking victims, especially female victims, exists among Uzbek police officers. In a survey conducted during the workshop, 88 percent of the participants agreed with the statement that trafficking victims were responsible for their own fate because they wanted an "easy life and big money" (with one participant writing: "They go themselves, nobody forces them to do so"). Forty-seven percent of the officers agreed that female victims are to blame because they willingly left their homes to work as prostitutes, while 70 percent said that victims all "wanted to marry rich foreigners." Some participants also pointed out that many female trafficking victims worked as prostitutes in Uzbekistan even before they were trafficked, and that these victims probably knew what kind of work they would be expected to perform abroad.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: We were pleased to see the start of this long awaited INL project, which was designed specifically to complement USAID-funded work to raise public awareness of trafficking issues and to assist victims. Embassies in attendance found the participants to be surprisingly engaged and active in the training, and the International Organization for Migration trainers reported that the officers' attitudes towards trafficking victims appeared to

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soften somewhat over the course of the two days. However, the survey results clearly show how much work remains to be done.

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